

Public Hearing Friday, Friday, February 27, 2015

Melinda Montovani, Social Worker and Brain Injury Specialist at Brain Injury Alliance of CT

Town of Residence: West Hartford, CT

Dear Honorable Chairs and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Melinda Montovani and I have the privilege of working for the Brain Injury Alliance of CT (BIAC), where we provide free brain injury services to the entire state of Connecticut. I reside in the town of West Hartford and work in Windsor.

I am testifying in opposition to the elimination of BIAC's operating grant as recommended in **H.B. No. 6846 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS.**

The Governor has proposed entirely eliminating BIAC's \$121,282 operating grant on the incorrect premise that BIAC is an advocacy organization.

The Department of Social Services contracts with BIAC to provide services required as part of the Medicaid Acquired Brain Injury program. **The contract with BIAC is used as evidence in several sections of the Waiver application showing that DSS is meeting the obligations of this federal program.** These programs are a core function of the Department of Social Services. If funding for BIAC is eliminated then the services would be done internally by DSS social workers.

Social Workers at Department of Social Services for the fiscal year July 2013-June 2014, were making as much as 80,000 + a year. Compare that with the salaries of a small non-profit where salaries range at **HALF** that amount. We currently have 4 staff who supply all the services listed above for \$121,282. Were our operating grant to be eliminated the state would be forced to pay DSS Social Workers to provide these services that are mandated in the ABI Waiver application. For 4 DSS social workers to operate the Statewide toll free Helpline, provide training and education, facilitate 24 support groups, disseminate information to the community related to brain injury and offer consultation and resource facilitation to individuals with brain injury, their families, caregivers and providers, would be a minimum cost of \$320,000 to the state.

Governor Malloy is cutting our operating grant to save the state money. Cutting our funding could end up more than doubling the amount the state ends up paying to provide those core services. By utilizing the services at the Brain Injury Alliance of CT the state is cutting its expenditures significantly. Not only is restoring the funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of CT the right thing to do for the community, individuals with brain injuries, family and caregivers, it makes financial sense and saves the state money.

I am seeking your commitment to restoring funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut

Thank you so much.